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EMMANUEL LE ROY LADURIE – THE HISTORIAN
“GENEROUS WITH LETTERS OF SUPPORT”
(Summary)

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Given that the researcher positions were extremely scarce, the mere criterion of an excellent and illustrious recommendation was no longer highly significant. Despite this aspect, the historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie played his role with obstinacy. Another merit is to have remained loyal to himself, providing his letters of recommendation with an original style recognisable across his works. The systematic refusal of administrative language platitudes is the most striking feature. His reply to a request made by the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia for a file concerning the research project of a candidate illustrates it effectively: “I am not a good bureaucrat, but a teacher and historian; instead of filling out your paper accurately but bureaucratically, I’d rather simply tell you what I think”. A glimpse of humour or sensitivity outlined by his pen conferred upon his letters the human profusion, thus making the gesture noble. The many pages penned by ELRL concerning the other historians are also, from this perspective, a mirror of his personality, interested in the challenges faced by his more or less young peers. In addition, they clarify the network of friendships in the scientific world as the star of ELRL reached its peak.

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